

A
CONVERSATION

Between a

BLACKSMITH

AND A *K*

MERCHANT,

UPON THE

SUBJECT of passing GUINEAS by
WEIGHT ONLY.



DUBLIN:

Printed in the Year MDCCCL.

A

Conversation, &c.

Smith. **I** Received from you Yesterday a Guinea, that wanted 5 s. 3 d. and when I offered it in Payment for Coals, it was refused, the Collier pleading that he could not pass it in *England*, without much Difficulty. Whereupon I was forced to get Silver for him, and this I found was no easy Matter to do; insomuch that I was obliged to buy Goods I did not then want, in order to get small Change, therefore pray give me a heavier Guinea instead of it.

Merchant. The  had the King's Image and Supercription, and therefore no Subject can refuse it.

Sm. I have been told by a Lawyer, that the King's Authority will warrant a Guinea worn away by fair Usage, but that when a Part of it is industriously cut away by a Sheers, or taken off by a File, any Man may lawfully refuse it, because it is not a whole Guinea, and the King's Image does not authorize the passing of a Piece of a Guinea for 1 l. 2 s. 9 d. therefore buy Goods of me, and I will take it.

Merch. I must confess that the Lawyer's Opinion seems to be well grounded.

Sm. Must the Rogues then go on to file down our Guineas, till they are reduced to Half-Guineas, and is there no Remedy?

Merch. The Law has provided a Remedy, which is the Gallows.

Sm. The Gallows say you? Why then does not the

the Gallows put a Stop to House-breaking, and Robbery on the Highway? Do our Rogues value a Minute's Pain in this World, when they believe that the Absolution of the Priest can save them from Hell in the next?

Merch. 'Tis very true; and yet we have no other Remedy that I know of, unless Guineas should pass for their real Value by Weight, as Gold does in most Parts of the World; but this would be very troublesome.

Sm. Troublesome say you? Don't you remember, that before the Reduction of Gold, we had little else than foreign Gold stirring, which all passed by Weight, and why will it give more Trouble to weigh Guineas?

Merch. I grant it; but if a more easy Remedy could be found, I should like it much better.

Sm. It is not for such Men as I am to direct you, let me therefore pray your Sense on that Head.

Merch. Well then, you shall have it in short: There are but two possible Ways of proceeding in this Business. The first is by a Recoinage of our Guineas and Half-Guineas, and this would be attended with great Inconveniencies, if it should be granted; for,

1st. We must wait till *Great Britain* leads the Way, our Guineas being all *British* Money; so that the Recoinage, if ever undertaken, must be of the whole Species in both Kingdoms.

2^{dly}. All the Guineas now dispersed thorough the Kingdom of *Ireland*, must in that Case be carried to the Mint in the Tower of *London*, where it will be received by Weight as so much Bullion, and not by Tale, whereupon a vast Deficiency will be found, which must all fall upon the Owners and Proprietors of such Gold, unless the Loss were to be made good by a national Tax, which would create infinite Perplexity and Confusion. Every Man, therefore, must abide by the Loss, in proportion to the Lightness of the Guineas in his Possession.

3^{dly}.

3dly. If a Recoinage was apprehended, every Man would get rid of his Guineas as fast as he could ; but who would there be to take that which every one was striving to part with ? The Bankers would receive none but by Weight ; for they, of all People, would endeavour to discharge their Coffers of falling Gold. The Consequence then would be a total Stagnation of all Payments in Guineas, which are the Bulk of our present Species, and it is easy to see how this must affect Trade and Credit.

4thly. If the Guineas were to be recoin'd, and sent over to us, the Mischief now complained of, would very soon return, for new weighty Guineas would be a fine Subject for the Rogues to work upon with their Files, and they would desire no better Game.

Sm. You have said enough to convince me, that this first Remedy, by a Recoinage of Guineas, would be extreamly inconvenient and burthensome, therefore pray let me hear your other Remedy, for you have said there can be but two.

Merch. This is, in one Word, the passing of all Guineas and Half-Guineas by Weight, and not by Tale ; but this would give every Body much Trouble.

Sm. It is evident that this would put an immediate Stop to the wicked Practice of filing the Guineas ; and will it be no more troublesome than the weighing of *Spanish* and *Portugal* Gold was a few Years ago, and which is universally practis'd to this Day ? for no Man will receive a Gold Cobb or a Moydore, or even a Pistole, without weighing it.

As to the Trouble of it, if it be necessary to be done, there is no pleading against it. I am no Scholar, nor Politician, and yet I will undertake to convince you, and every Man, that this ought to be done.

The Practice of Filing is every Day going on, and pray where must it end ? If a Guinea wants three or four, and sometimes five Shillings To-day, that same Guinea will go on diminishing till it be filed down to
half

half a Guinea by this Day Twelvemonth. They are already so reduced in Size, that I have been puzzled to distinguish, at first Sight, between a Guinea and a broad Half-Guinea, the Circumferences of a broad Half-Guinea, and a whole Guinea well sweated, and doctored by these Artists, being so nearly equal, that without observing the Thickness, and poising the Weight on your Finger, you could hardly judge of the Difference; and such is their Industry, that they have of late attacked the poor Half Guineas, when they could not procure whole ones; for they do not care to be idle, and will play at small Game, rather than stand out.

Is it not therefore plain, that in a short Time our Guineas will be reduced to one half of their real Value, and consequently that a certain Period must come, when every Man must lose one half of the Value of the *British* Gold he shall be possessed of?

Merch. I shall not allow this Consequence, for we do not eat and drink Gold; and if a Guinea filed down to one half of the real Value, will still pass, and procure me as much Meat, Drink, and Cloaths, as when it was entire, is it not just as good to me?

Sm. I agree with you, that it is as good for the present Time, and a Bit of stampd Paper will do as well: but do you look no further? Do you not see, that when Things are come to an Extremity, there must be a Remedy, either by reforming the Guineas by a newCoinage, or by weighing them, and that in either Case you must lose one half of what is in your Possession? and since it must come to this at last, is not the first Loss the best; and will not every wise Man choose the least of two Evils, and rather pass his Guinea at present by Weight, at nineteen or twenty Shillings, though the weighing will give Trouble, than lose half of it seven Years hence?

But this, bad as it is, will not be all the Mischief; for this Diminution of the Guineas will, by degrees, produce the Loss of all our Silver Coin, which is already grown scarce.

Merch.

Merch. Pray shew me the Connection between these two Events.

Sm. Nothing is more evident. Suppose that one of these Operators in *England* or *Holland*, after he has filed off 2 s. each from a thousand Guineas, finds some Difficulty and Danger in passing them in *England*, what has he to do but to send them over to a Correspondent in *Ireland*, who will pass them off at 1 l. 2 s. 9 d. each, without any Difficulty. But how shall this Operator receive Value for them? Very easily: for he will either receive it in Goods, which if it be not convenient for his Purpose, his *Irish* Correspondent will pick him up Silver to the Value of his thousand Guineas, and send it over to him in some secret manner.

Here then is above one hundred Pounds gained to him, and lost to *Ireland*; and if fifty of such industrious Operators should labour at this profitable Trade, and make six Returns in the Year, must not this secret Drain, in a little time, carry off your Silver Coin, and leave the Kingdom without small Change to answer a retailing Trade, and pay Manufacturers, Labourers, and the private Soldiers, who will be disabled from purchasing the Necessaries of Life at the Market?

Now, pray Sir, put the Decay of Trade, the Distress of all the Poor, and the Ruin of our Country, into one Scale, and the Trouble of weighing Guineas into the other, and judge which should preponderate.

Merch. I am convinced, and freely give up the Point to you, and shall make light of the Trouble of weighing Gold, since the Good of my Country requires it. At the same Time I cannot but have a Concern for the Bankers, who must suffer greatly by this Scheme.

Sm. I must confess that their Case will be hard; but let me observe, that it will be harder even upon them, if this Remedy be deferred: For if a Banker has twenty thousand Guineas in his Chest, had he not
better

better lose so many Half-crowns by them now, than double or treble that Sum a few Years hence ; and yet this must infallibly be the Case, if the Filing goes on.

Besides, that this is a Casualty that all large Dealers in any Species of Commodities are liable to by sudden Rises and Falls of Markets ; and we know that Money is the proper Commodity that Bankers deal in.

Merch. You have set this Affair in so clear a Light before me, that I am ashamed of my own Stupidity, and think that we are all asleep ; for if we had our Senses about us, we could not avoid seeing the daily Robbery committed upon our Gold Species, without looking forwards to the national Distraction it must necessarily end in. If a Borderer on my Estate, should by Degrees steal my Land by Roods, I should soon take the Alarm, and reclaim my Property. And the present Case is nearly the same ; for though these Miscreants do not actually take the Guineas out of my Purse to cut away a Part of them, yet they are filing down those that will come soon into my Purse, and which hereafter must finally stop there, and then I must make good the Deficiency.

This, which is my Case, is the Case of every Man who is to receive a Guinea ; the Robbery is at this Hour committing upon his Substance, and he must soon feel it ; in the mean Time it is growing worse and worse ; and therefore common Prudence, and a little Foresight, will tell him that the earliest Remedy is the best.

Sm. But whence is this Remedy to come, and who must apply it ? for if a light Guinea should be paid in my Bill, I cannot refuse it without disobliging my Customer ; and when I have it, I must get it off as well as I can, according to the old Saying, *He that buys the Devil, must sell him again.*

Merch. I must not give a plain Answer to your Question. Every Body but you, knows very well whence the Remedy must come ; for it can come from

from one Place only, and that I shall not name aloud, but let me whisper it in your Ear.

Sm. I wish this effectual Remedy may soon come, for I am under a strong Temptation. My Business has taught me to handle a File as well as any Man, and I need not lay out a Penny for Tools. I am fain to sweat at my Trade, from Morning to Night, for half a Crown, whereas I could with Ease get twenty Shillings a Day in following this sweet Business of filing Guineas. My Wife urges me to begin, and says, she should soon set up a Tea Equipage, and appear in a Silk Gown at Church, as other Gentlewomen do.

Merch. Beware of the Gallows, Friend, remember *G——an's* Fate, and listen not to your *Dalilah*; for if Fame be not a Liar, she casts a loving Eye upon young *Roger* the Baker, who lives over-against you, and often gives her a hot Roll for Breakfast, which is well buttered at your Cost. All the Neighbours take Notice of this, and say your Horns are beginning to sprout: Have you felt your Forehead lately? When you are hanged out of the Way, the Silk Gown will clinch the Bargain with *Roger*, who is a comely young Fellow.

Sm. This is mere Malice; for I am sure my *Dalilah*, as you are pleased to call her, is a virtuous Woman, and would not change me for the Baker with his mealy Chaps, though I believe she would gladly go a little finer than some of her sort. But however, God keep me from the Temptation of Gold Dust, for my Fingers itch to be practising upon these shining Guineas, and I often dream that I am at work; but the Fancy that I feel a Halter about my Neck awakens me from my golden Dream. Where it will end I know not; but I wish that an Order may soon come out for weighing Guineas, that so I might sleep quietly, and drudge on, with my Wife in a plain Stuff Gown.

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F I N I S.

[The text on this page is extremely faint and illegible. It appears to be a single paragraph of text, possibly a letter or a page from a book. The ink is very light, and the paper shows signs of age and wear.]